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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000088

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP AND INL; DEA FOR OF, OFF;
USPACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: [SNAR](#) [KCRM](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: GOB, UNODC TAKE PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES IN ADVANCE
OF INDICTMENTS

REF: A. RANGOON 66

[B.](#) RANGOON 62 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: COM Carmen Martinez for Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

[¶1.](#) (C) Summary: The GOB, as well as the UNODC, has undertaken efforts to clear Wa territory in northern Shan State of all UN and NGO expatriate staff in anticipation of an international law enforcement operation o/a January 24 targeting UWSA leaders. We continue to have no expectation that GOB authorities will respond to the Operation Warlord indictments by arresting UWSA leaders. However, it is clear that the GOB is uncertain how the Wa will react to the unsealing of the indictments on January 24. Although the Wa leaders could ignore the law enforcement effort, and have no history of targeting foreign diplomats or expatriate staff, the precautions undertaken by UNODC strike us as sensible.
End Summary.

[¶2.](#) (C) In anticipation of an international law enforcement operation targeting the leadership of the United Wa State Army (UWSA), the GOB has taken extraordinary efforts to clear Wa territory (Special Region #2) of all foreigners working with UN agencies and international NGOs. Police Colonel Hkam Awng, joint secretary of the Central Committee for Drugs Abuse Control (CCDAC), informed UNODC that his office had met with senior NGO officials in Rangoon and "indicated very clearly and precisely that we do not want any expats left behind working in Special Region (2) after 23 January."

[¶3.](#) (C) According to UNODC country representative Jean Luc Lemahieu, the UNODC and CCDAC are co-sponsoring a week-long "Brainstorming Session on Alternative Development" that will commence in Rangoon on January 24. All expatriate staff of UNODC's partner organizations who work in Wa territory have been invited to attend. Both Lemahieu and Col. Hkam Awng have indicated to us that the session has been organized as a pretext for moving expatriate staff out of harm's way should the UWSA respond negatively to any imminent law enforcement action.

[¶4.](#) (C) Note: As reported in ref A, the DEA informed Lemahieu on January 16 that an unspecified, though pending, law enforcement action o/a January 24 could have some impact on UNODC activities in Wa territory. Lemahieu has also been in close touch with the GOB (CCDAC) on this issue. Although Lemahieu did not reveal to us how much detail he knows about Operation Warlord (ref B), he demonstrated a clear understanding of the likely scenario and the implications for UNODC programs. He has drafted a UNODC press release, to be issued "after the event," which we e-mailed to EAP/BCLTV and INL on January 20. End Note.

[¶5.](#) (SBU) In addition to the brainstorming session for partner organizations, UNODC has also taken additional, precautionary measures. Two UNDOC-sponsored missions for diplomats (and journalists) to visit Wa territory in late January and early February have been canceled (ref A). Expatriate UNODC staff will depart the region by January 23 and all non-essential local staff will relocate to towns outside the region (Lashio and Kentung). UNODC operations in the Wa capital of Pang Sang and further north have been temporarily suspended. Projects in the southern areas of Special Region #2 will continue, but with minimal staff. UNODC operations in areas adjacent to Wa territory (including Kokang Special Region #4) will continue, but "with utmost caution."

[¶6.](#) (C) Comment: We continue to have no expectation that GOB authorities will respond to the indictments by arresting any of the UWSA leaders. However, it is clear that the GOB is uncertain how the Wa will react to the unsealing of the indictments on January 24. The Wa capital of Pang Sang has been the scene of considerable activity over the past week as thousands of Wa (and leaders of other ethnic cease-fire groups) gathered for the funeral of UWSA Deputy Commander Li Tzu Ru, who died on January 9 (ref B). Although the Wa leaders could ignore the indictments, and have no history of targeting foreign diplomats or expatriate staff, the precautions undertaken by UNODC strike us as sensible. End Comment.
Martinez